



# TIP OF THE SPEAR



## Brazil hosts Fuerzas Comando 2009

- ♠ Green Beret graduates from Brazilian jungle school
- ♠ SWCC training enhances maritime security in Dominican Republic
- ♠ Romanian chief of staff visits Naval Special Warfare Units



Sniper teams head out to the start of the Sniper Stalk event for the Fuerzas Comando 2009 Competition. The Ghillie Suits help them remain unseen while they engage their targets. Photo by SOCSOUTH Public Affairs.

## Sixth Annual Fuerzas Comando Competition 16

# Tip of the Spear

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*Front Cover: A member of Panama's Special Forces Unit from the Nacional Police negotiates an obstacle course event during Fuerzas Comando 2009 in Goiania, Brazil. Special operations military and police forces representing 21 countries throughout the Western Hemisphere gathered for the Sixth Annual Fuerzas Comando Competition hosted by Brazil, June 17 through June 25. Photo courtesy of Special Operations Command — South.*



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## **SOF AROUND THE WORLD - IRAQ**

### **COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – ARABIAN PENINSULA**



# **Al Anbar's best compete in SWAT Tactical Competition**

*A competitor begins the live-fire obstacle course with the tire-flip during the SWAT Tactical Competition. SWAT units from Al Qaim, Hadithah, Rawah and Anah competed in the day-long event that included physical training assessments, marksmanship drills and squad movement tactics. At day's end, Hadithah came out on top.*

*Story and photos by Sgt. Brandon Pomrenke  
Special Operations Task Force – West*

Special Weapons and Tactics personnel from multiple cities in Anbar province, Iraq, gathered to compete in the SWAT Tactical Competition June 29 in Rawah, Iraq.

SWAT personnel from Haditha, Rawah, Al Qaim and Anah welcomed the friendly competition that tested each team's physical endurance, strategy and marksmanship. In the end, however, there could be only one first place

winner. The final counts resulted in a mere 12-point margin and revealed the Haditha SWAT as the day's top competitor.

"Competition between all the SWATs is good," said Iraqi Capt. Khalid of the Haditha SWAT. "It makes them sure about (themselves), and they get to learn and shape their skills while they gain experience."

The SWAT Tactical Competition also gave the different provincial security forces an opportunity to see each other in action.

"This is a chance to meet the other SWATs and



share,” said Iraqi Lt. Aussama of the Rawah SWAT. “Our mission in Rawah is to beat all insurgency so none is left; our missions are the same.”

SWAT units throughout Anbar have been training to keep their country safe. Events like the SWAT Tactical Competition give them the chance not only to compete, but to learn from their teammates and counterparts.

“If they make mistakes, they can learn from them to be better in the future,” said Aussama. “We are always looking forward to the future.”

Many cities have already witnessed their provincial SWAT’s success with operations that resulted in the capture of dangerous criminals and terrorists.

“Since 2006, we have been working hard to clean up the cities,” said Iraqi Lt. Ghazi from the Al Qaim SWAT. Al Qaim was the hub of al-Qaida, but now they fear us. They know we don’t cut anyone slack. We are tough, and we mean business.”

The SWAT units are here to protect the everyday Iraqi citizen from harm and to legally seek out those who would do them harm. This mission takes cooperation, training, time and a desire to protect the people.

“We are support for the Iraq Police and the whole community,” said Khalid. “We help each other and learn from each other to better (provide) support.”

As important as training is to any security force, being able to apply that training to a real scenario is the test.

“We get the job done,” said Ghazi. “(Our) team is the Lion of Al Qaim, the king of the city, and we are there to assist the IP and (Iraqi Army) because of our level of training. If he is an insurgent, we will get him. What we have is pride to be SWAT.”

***A competitor performs pull-ups during the physical fitness assessment portion of the SWAT Tactical Competition.***





**SOF AROUND THE WORLD - IRAQ**  
**COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE - ARABIAN PENINSULA**



# **Anbar's JSOF train hard to keep skills sharp**

**Photos by Sgt. Brandon Pomrenke  
Special Operations Task Force-West**





*(Opposite page)  
Two 9th Regional  
Commando Battalion, Iraqi  
Special Operations Forces soldiers  
stand atop a rooftop as one checks his radio  
and another pulls security during training in Anbar  
province, Iraq.*

*(Above, clockwise) Soldiers from the 9th Regional Commando Battalion,  
Iraqi Special Operations Forces, use military vehicles as they drive through the  
desert sand to enter a village suspected of housing criminal elements during training  
in Al Anbar province.*

*An ISOF soldier quickly makes his way to cover as he runs toward a building during a  
training scenario. Soldiers carefully approach a building suspected of hiding a terrorist during training at an Anbar province  
military installation.*

*A squad of ISOF soldiers maneuver around obstacles and over the sand-covered road to approach a building.*

*The training allowed the ISOF soldiers to practice approaching buildings both on foot and with their vehicles. By practicing  
different methods of approaching dangerous areas, the soldiers enhance their ability to successfully capture those wanting  
to cause harm to Iraq.*



**SOF AROUND THE WORLD - IRAQ**

**COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – ARABIAN PENINSULA**

# ISOF deepen ranks as U.S. Forces withdraw from cities

*By Army Sgt. Jeffrey Ledesma  
Special Operations Task Force – Central*

Symbolic of the blood – both of fallen fighters and slain foes – that has been shed in the fight for freedom and democracy, the words “fighting the insurgency for a secure and stable Iraq” were written in a dripping red font on a poster affixed to one of the auditorium’s pale white walls.

Inside, a group of Iraqi Special Operations Forces soldiers were officially decorated with the highly respected Commando patch during a ceremony held on an Iraqi military compound in Baghdad July 1.

Following the June 30 target date for U.S. Forces to pull out of the cities, the elite group of soldiers earned the right to wear the patch, an honor often equated to the U.S. Army’s esteemed Ranger tab, during a physically and mentally demanding 47-day training cycle.

With an audience of more than 600 people, the ceremony was initiated by the singing of the Iraqi national anthem.

“Members of the Special Forces are not like any other men,” said Iraqi 1st Lt. Ali from behind a wooden podium. “In their hearts is an unyielding light, and in their steps is a fierce fire.”



***Iraqi Special Operations Forces soldiers conduct fast-rope training into a mock village during the Commando Selection Course on an Iraqi military compound in Baghdad. The 47-day Commando Selection Course is similar to the U.S. Army’s Ranger School. Photo by Navy Lt. Chris Roath.***

The officer in charge of the training said that the five key stages in becoming a Commando are pressure management, lectures on strategy and procedures,



tactical shooting, fast roping in and out of helicopters, and the mastering of operational assaults.

“We want to apply pressure to see how they will react to high stress situations,” said Iraqi Sgt. Maj. Ahmad, one of the lead instructors. “The management of that stress brings a soldier’s character to the surface.”

“Bottom line: We want to see how much they can take,” he declared.

During the arsenal phase, Ahmad said the Commando recruits broke down various weapons to their simplest form and were trained to put the intricate pieces back together. Naturally, he added, they learned to skillfully fire those weapons during marksmanship instruction.

During the ceremony, a soldier in the Iraqi honor guard passed a flag to another, signifying the transfer of the 34th Commando class to the next. Afterward, the ISOF Taekwondo team performed in honor of the newly marked Commandos, kicking wooden boards into splinters and breaking up sheets of rock.

“You will be the sword against the insurgency — an insurgency that despises us because of our love for our country,” the Counter Terrorism Command’s Maj. Gen. Abdul Ghani, the guest speaker for the event, reminded the graduates.

The ISOF Brigade’s commander, Maj. Gen. Fadhel Barwari, positioned a Commando patch on the class leaders. In addition to the patch, each of the graduates received a certificate and, as often seen in traditional ceremonies, gifts from the high-ranking Iraqi commanders in attendance.

It is a time when the question remains heavy on the



***The Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade commander, Maj. Gen. Fadhel Barwari, places a Commando patch on a newly qualified soldier during a ceremony held on an Iraqi military compound in Baghdad July 1. The newly dubbed Commando completed the mentally and physically challenging 47 days of the selection process. Photo by Army Sgt. Jeffrey Ledesma.***

minds of many in relation to the deadline for American Forces to withdraw from the cities. According to an instructor, this class of elite soldiers is an essential part of the answer to that question.

“It’s an incredible feeling you cannot even explain — playing a hand in preparing a soldier to fight terrorism,” Ahmad said. “It is a good feeling, thank God. Today we produce a force capable of hitting the insurgency with a massive blow.

“We reached a point where they are graduating, a point where a new generation of soldiers is stepping up to fight.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the patriotism of the soldiers echoed throughout the auditorium. “Victorious you are Baghdad,” the Commandos chanted with an overwhelming sense of pride.



**SOF AROUND THE WORLD - IRAQ**

**COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – ARABIAN PENINSULA**

# Special Forces dedicate compound to fallen comrade

*A Special Forces Soldier with Special Operations Task Force – North recites the Special Forces Prayer to a formation of his peers during a memorial dedication ceremony July 4 on Firebase Bennett in Tikrit, Iraq. The compound was renamed in honor of Sgt. 1st Class William Bennett, who was killed in action in Ar Ramadi in 2003. Photo by Lt. Gustavo Perez.*

***By Spc. Ben Fox***  
***Special Operations Task Force – North***

Troops from Special Operations Task Force – North on Combat Operations Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq, unveiled a memorial July 4 dedicating the unit's compound as Firebase Bennett during a brief ceremony honoring a fallen warrior.

Life Support Area 100 is officially named after Army Sgt. 1st Class William Bennett of Operational Detachment Alpha 595, 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), who was the first Special Operations Forces casualty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Bennett was killed in action in Ar Ramadi Sept. 12, 2003. Each SOF compound in Northern Iraq has been renamed in honor of other Special Forces fallen heroes.

Army Lt. Col. David Bolduc, the SOTF-N commander, opened the ceremony with a speech to his troops about Bennett's courage and the operation in which

he lost his life.

"(Sergeant First Class Bennett's) courage in battle bonds us together, inspires and strengthens our resolve," said Bolduc. "Let us honor (Bill's) sacrifice by vowing to never forget his story."

Following his speech, Bolduc and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Beebe, the SOTF-N command sergeant major, officially unveiled the memorial wall. The painted wall has a plaque honoring Bennett and his sacrifice.

"This ceremony is not about a plaque on a wall," said Army Sgt. Maj. Hank Marsh, the SOTF's operations sergeant major. "It's about a Special Forces brother, it's about my Special Forces brother."

Marsh gave a brief account of Bennett's life as his personal friend and fellow Special Forces Soldier, portraying him as a compassionate and spiritual person.

"He defined selfless service for me and to me," he said. "Though he desired greatness for the whole, he acknowledged and served each individual."



# SF train Iraqi personal security detail

*Story and photo by Spc. Ben Fox  
Special Operations Task Force – North*

In order to provide added capabilities for Iraqi Security Forces in Ninewa province, U.S. Special Forces recently trained two Iraqi personal security details to protect elected officials in the province.

The five-day course, conducted on Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq, covered personal security techniques, immediate medical care and basic marksmanship skills.

“The overall intent is to teach the detail to protect and secure their democratically elected officials,” said the primary course instructor, who preferred to be called Sgt. Lex due to operational security reasons.

The students had a wide range of experience in military and PSD service. By the end of the course, however, every student had learned intricate techniques and concepts.

On the first day of training, Lex gave the students an overview of the course and introduced them to his drill sergeant training style to instill discipline in the team.

“We inculcated a ‘one-team, one-fight’ environment from the very beginning,” said Lex. “We had to ensure they understood that every individual effort affects the total outcome. This really paid dividends by the end of the course just like it will when they conduct operations in Ninewa.”

The hands-on portion started the next day, beginning with medical training. SF medics taught the students how to provide medical treatment for battlefield wounds in order to keep each other and their official alive following an attack.

The instructors ensured the students understood the basics of maintaining an airway, assistance in breathing, ensuring circulation and controlling breathing, said a medical instructor.

Two SF instructors taught the marksmanship portion, which involved safely loading, unloading and clearing their weapons. They also focused on applying the fundamentals of basic rifle marksmanship while firing from the standing, kneeling and prone positions.

Once the students had a handle on the basics, the marksmanship instructors taught the detail more advanced

techniques, such as correcting weapon malfunctions, magazine changes and how to shoot and move.

Following marksmanship training, Lex taught the team how to move in a protective formation and evacuate their official out of danger. The students drilled on the security techniques until it became second nature for them.

With the routines lodged firmly in their minds, Lex gave the students scenarios to run through, such as safely escorting an official to a meeting and reacting to crowds or threats. The detail did these scenarios until each squad knew how to react to each situation.

“It’s virtually impossible to expose the students to every possible scenario they’ll face, so we focused the training to the likely threats and conditions they’ll encounter in their area of operations,” said Lex. “More important than learning hundreds of techniques, we wanted to focus on principles and teamwork with the intent of them learning how to think and not what to think.”

The final day began with a practical exercise in which the detail escorted mock officials to meetings and had to react to threats against the officials they were assigned to protect. After the exercise, the detail graduated and each student received a certificate of completion.

“I’m extremely proud of this protective detail. We’ve introduced them to several scenarios not covered in training, and they’ve responded like seasoned veterans,” he said.



*Students of a personal security detail course, taught by U.S. Special Forces, practice walking in a protective formation at a rifle range on Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq.*



## SOE AROUND THE WORLD - FRANCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE



*"Iron Mike," the French memorial dedicated to those airborne troopers killed in the liberation of France, overlooks paratroopers participating in an airborne drop June 7 as part of week-long events commemorating the 65th Anniversary of D-Day. More than 300 paratroopers from the United States, France and Germany participated in the drop outside of Sainte Mere Eglise, France.*

# SOCEUR participates in historic event honoring D-Day vets

*Story and photos by Master Sgt. Donald Sparks  
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

Paratroopers representing all services of U.S. Special Operations Command Europe jumped into the same fields of Normandy, France, June 7, just as paratroopers did 65 years ago, as part of the D-Day invasion by Allied

Expeditionary forces.

The massive air drop of more than 300 airborne paratroopers culminated a week of memorial events held at Sainte Mere Eglise, France, honoring the 65th Anniversary of D-Day.

Airborne units from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions liberated many French towns in some of the



most epic battles of World War II. Some of the last surviving veterans from those units who took part in the invasion came across the Atlantic to once again walk the beaches and fields of Normandy.

Throughout the weeklong commemoration, SOCEUR servicemembers personally engaged the veterans from D-Day, gave away military souvenirs to children and took photos with the thousands of World War II reenactors who “stormed” on the small French town.

“The entire event was a phenomenal experience where I could take in the history and pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate price for our freedoms,” said Air Force Master Sgt. John Cauffman, SOCEUR Operations executive officer. “Meeting a veteran with four combat jumps and a Ranger who fought at Pointe du Hoc were the highlights of the trip.”

The story of D-Day has been chronicled in the mini-series “Band of Brothers,” which highlights the experiences of E Company (Easy Company) of the 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

As an avid fan of the documentary and of the 101st Airborne Division, Army Staff Sgt. Odwin Matthews felt the experience of meeting the World War II veterans gave him a surge of pride as a

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*“All Americans should visit Normandy at least once in their lives to take in the experience and show gratitude for the sacrifices [veterans] made for their freedoms.”*

—Master Sgt. John Cauffman

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Soldier like never before.

“The D-Day invasion has to be one of the most significant events to have occurred in our military history, and to walk the grounds of some of the most fierce battles and meet some of the veterans from that time was a very proud and humbling experience for me personally and as an American Soldier,” said Matthews, SOCEUR Logistics Support non-commissioned officer in charge. “Our nation and the world is in a

better place because of the display of extraordinary heroism and sacrifices by the United States and our Allies on June 6, 1944.”



**Sgt. 1st Class Richard Schultz, left, assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command Europe at Stuttgart, Germany, and Spc. Nyaenya Enock, assigned to 173rd Brigade Support Battalion at Bamberg, Germany, walk in the rain displaying the American flag after completing their airborne drop.**

For 65 years there have been stories told throughout towns in Normandy, France, of the brave American fighting men who fought for freedom and suffered the horrors of war. Their appreciation of the paratroopers who liberated them has been passed on from generation to generation, and their unwavering affection for those paratroopers was expressed symbolically during the commemoration events.

“All Americans should visit Normandy at least once in their lives to take in the experience and show gratitude for the sacrifices (veterans) made for their freedoms,” Cauffman said.



## **SOF AROUND THE WORLD**

### **JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – PHILIPPINES**

# **Secretary of Defense Gates presents JSOTF-P Soldier with Bronze Star**

*By Maj. John Hutcheson*  
*JSOTF-Philippines Public Affairs*

Defense Secretary Robert Gates presented the Bronze Star June 1, to Army Staff Sgt. Peter Biggane, a Special Forces medical sergeant with Operational Detachment Alpha 1122 of the Joint Special Operations Task Force — Philippines.

Gates made a brief visit to the Philippines to reaffirm U.S. commitment to the country's fight against terrorism and took some time to visit with U.S. troops serving there.

Biggane, on his second deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines, was recognized for outstanding service during his last deployment from October 2007 to June 2008.

According to his award citation, Biggane provided critical medical care to two civilians with bullet and shrapnel wounds following a firefight between Philippine Marines and members of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf in late December 2007. He immediately stabilized his patients and treated them for several hours until casualty evacuation could be arranged. "Without his skillful casualty care, both civilians likely would have died," according to the citation.

"The mission here is an excellent opportunity for Special Forces medics to hone their medical skills, realize their potential and help those in need," said Biggane.

In addition to providing critical combat casualty care, Biggane spent much of his time advising and assisting Philippine Marines of the 2nd Marine Brigade with battle tracking, liaison support and coordination of theater level aerial ISR platforms.

According to the citation, Biggane's situational awareness and skilled exploitation of intelligence data was vital to the 2nd Marine Brigade's success in effectively targeting enemy networks and neutralizing Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiya influence on eastern Jolo.

In addition, the 10-year Army veteran was instrumental



***Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pins the Bronze Star Medal on Staff Sgt. Peter Biggane in Manila, Republic of the Philippines, June 1. Biggane, a Special Forces medical sergeant with the Joint Special Operations Task Force — Philippines, was recognized for his outstanding performance in a previous deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines. JSOTF-P courtesy photo.***

in assisting the Armed Forces of the Philippines in conducting civil-military operations on Jolo, effectively enlisting the aid of interagency partners and non-governmental organizations to support humanitarian assistance projects. Within the first three months of his eight-month tour, he was able to facilitate medical and dental treatment for more than 2,000 Filipinos in isolated areas who have scarce access to regular medical care.

Finally, Biggane made huge contributions to the AFP's ability to take care of their wounded by conducting Combat Lifesaver courses and advanced lifesaving skills for Philippine Marines. The courses provided 2nd Marine Brigade with an organic core cadre of proficient instructors and the ability to conduct independent training of other Marines. Ultimately more than 800 Marines were trained in these techniques, increasing the ability of Philippine forces to effectively conduct operations and treat their wounded.



# JSOTF-P, Philippine military rebuilding schools burned by Abu Sayyaf Group

*By Petty Officer 1st Class Fletcher Gibson  
JSOTF – Philippines Public Affairs*

The Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines is partnering with Philippine Navy SEABEES to rebuild two schools in Central Sumisip on the island of Basilan that were burned to the ground by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in late March.

Members of the ASG torched Erelley and Sitio Obal elementary schools March 28, reportedly in retaliation for the town's past cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The reconstruction is a joint effort between JSOTF-P, the AFP's National Development Support Command and the Philippine Navy's Mobile Construction Battalion 1. The three organizations worked together to assess the proposed project and develop plans, with JSOTF-P providing the funding and materials to back the AFP's construction efforts.

"There was extensive fire damage," said Cmdr. Leonard Schilling, the senior engineer for JSOTF-P. "The schools need significant repair. We're glad to be able to support this project to ensure the children in Sumisip can get a good education."

The NDSC estimates the construction will take about 10 to 12 weeks to complete. In the meantime, the construction battalion has built a temporary shelter for the two schools' nearly 600 students and teachers to meet.

As school construction progresses, the U.S. civil affairs team leader on Basilan said that it's the children who are paying the biggest price for ASG's actions.



**Members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group burned down this school in Sumisip on the southern Philippine Island of Basilan March 28, 2009. The U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines is partnering with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the local government in Basilan to rebuild this school and another nearby school also burned down by the ASG. Courtesy photo.**

"It's inconceivable what the ASG could hope to gain by burning down schools," said Army Capt. Charlie Claypool, the officer in charge of JSOTF-P's Civil Affairs Team 734, which works alongside the AFP to conduct civil-military operations on Basilan. "There is no ideology — political, religious or otherwise — that could justify it and nothing to be gained except for further alienating the population."

Claypool said he's been pleased with the level of cooperation between the AFP and the local government to make this project a reality. While the AFP refurbishes the buildings, he said the local mayor has begun planning for a project to level the roads leading to Sumisip, which are showing extensive rutting from rain and heavy use.

Once the new schools are up and running, the students will be set up for success, thanks to the United States Agency for International Development, which is donating desks and textbooks to both schools.

At the invitation of the Philippine government, JSOTF-P supports the Philippine Armed Forces in defeating terrorist groups such as Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiya in the southern Philippines and in preventing these groups from establishing safe havens from which to train other terrorists.



**SOF AROUND THE WORLD - BRAZIL**  
**SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH**

# Brazil hosts Sixth Annual Fuerzas Comando Competition

*Story and photos by Special Operations  
Command-South Public Affairs*

Special operations military and police forces representing 21 countries throughout the Western Hemisphere gathered for the Sixth Annual Fuerzas Comando Competition hosted by Brazil, June 17 through 25.

Security forces from Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Uruguay took part in the challenging contest, which promoted military-to-military relationships, increased interoperability and improved regional security.

Days before the opening ceremony, judges representing each of the participating nations gathered to validate the various events of the competition in order to fairly grade the participants.

Once course validations were complete and participants clearly understood expectations, the official opening ceremony commenced June 18, signifying the official start of the Special Forces competition.

The opening ceremony featured welcoming speeches from Brig. Gen. Hector Pagan, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command South and Gen. Paulo Humberto, Brazil's Special Operations Brigade commander.

"During Fuerzas Comando, we will have the opportunity to exchange experiences and gain new knowledge about ourselves, our countries and our cultures," said Pagan.

"These interactions create bonds that cross international boundaries," Pagan added.

"The competitors have trained to compete; however, we must not forget that the most important thing is the bond we are creating and fortifying," said Humberto.







*Members of Panama's Special Forces Unit from the Nacional Police negotiate an obstacle course event during Fuerzas Comando 2009 in Goiania, Brazil.*



When the competition began in 2004, there were only 13 countries participating and now, six years later, the number has grown to 21. Mexico, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago are competing for the first time.

“We hope to never fail to remember that by the end of this competition, we will all be winners,”

said Humberto.

Over the next six days, the competitors navigated through a series of obstacles testing their physical fitness, weapon proficiency and ability to work as a team.

Four tasks awaited the participants of the 21 countries throughout the first day—a range estimation, sniper stalk, rifle and pistol qualification, and swimming. The snipers evaluated targets at varying distances from the firing line. The teams of two relied only on their eyes and experience to determine the distance to their respective target, and then they were allowed to utilize the help of either scopes or binoculars.

After the teams completed this task, they progressed into the sniper stalk. Under concealment of Ghillie Suit and shadow, the two-man sniper teams tracked through vegetation to sight and engage targets. They were required to make two shots within 200 meters of the target without being seen by judges observing from a set distance.

Meanwhile, their assault team counterparts qualified



***A U.S. competitor and member of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) moves through obstacles during the stress test event of Fuerzas Comando 2009 in Goiania, Brazil.***

on a shooting range with their rifles and pistols. This event evaluated their basic combat assault techniques and weapons proficiency. In the evening, competing teams entered the water and tested their aquatic skills in an Olympic-size pool. The teams of six negotiated over two log obstacles and swam underneath a wooden grill a total of six times during the 300-meter swim.

The second day was just as physically and mentally grueling as the first. The critical tasks evaluation and the sniper marksmanship event are designed to stress the competitors’ accuracy and lethality. The sniper marksmanship event is designed to assess the sniper team’s ability to work together, as spotter and shooter, while they engage targets ranging from distances of 200 to 600 meters. Partnership is important in this event because the targets are timed, unexpected and fleeting.

Team members also get the opportunity to exchange ideas as they await their turn to compete. “The camaraderie and friendships we build with other partner nations excites me the most about this competition,” said 2nd Lt. Montero, a Dominican Republic team leader competing in this year’s competition.

The critical tasks evaluation event alone is intended to evaluate a team member’s proficiency in the execution of vital assault element tasks, such as target identification and shooting from behind cover. The course simulates assault environments where timing and precise aim are essential to mission success. According to Montero, it is important for teams to be able to rely on each other during missions, and the understanding of each other’s limits and restraints is equally important.



***Two Uruguayan members of the elite Scorpion Command, 14th Airborne Battallion (Comando Escorpión Del Batallón 14 De Paracaidistas) negotiate the ropes at the obstacle course event during Fuerzas Comando 2009 in Goiania, Brazil.***



The third day quickly approached and was just as fast paced as the other two. The stress test, a field firing range and a federal shoot were the tasks at hand. The stress test assessed the assault teams' proficiency with various weapons systems immediately after experiencing physical stress. Participants were pushed to their physical limits with different requirements, such as lifting and moving various heavy objects from one station to another, all while running and engaging various pistol and rifle targets.

The field firing range tested the sniper teams' abilities to engage targets at varying unknown distances. Targets vary in range from 300 to 1000 meters. During the federal shoot, event participants had to engage various targets from 100 meters after completing a 700-meter run and a "wounded" buddy carry for 50 meters.

On the fourth, fifth and sixth day of the competition, Fuerzas Comando 2009 kicked into high gear with four events and the Distinguished Visitor's Program taking place.

Competitors began the day with the orienteering event, which tests physical conditioning as well as teamwork and land navigation skills. The participants also competed in a round-robin style aquatic event and a combined assault, both designed to test weapons proficiency and teamwork.

The final event of the three-day stretch was the obstacle course. Here, the contestants worked together in order to successfully complete each station of the course.

During the Distinguished Visitor's Seminar, participating nations discussed ways to improve communication and multinational cooperation. A brigade-level commander of the competing team and a senior level representative from each participating nation involved in making counterterrorism decisions and policy-making participated in the seminar.

On the seventh day of Fuerzas Comando 2009, 13 special operations teams took part in an airborne operation over the skies of Goiania. Upon completion of the airborne operation, those who jumped earned the right to wear Brazilian jump wings.

The closing ceremony capped off the week with farewell speeches from Pagan and Humberto. Pagan expressed his gratitude towards Humberto for his hospitality and to the various parties who have supported this year's competition.

"The brotherhood of arms that our militaries share creates an unbreakable camaraderie that only grows greater every year we come together during Fuerzas Comando," said Pagan.

"I knew for sure that we were competing amongst brothers," said Humberto. "Even though there are language barriers, we have transcended those boundaries with the language of friendship."

Brazil took 1st place, with Ecuador in 2nd and Colombia finishing 3rd.

"It is with sadness, seeing the moment of farewell to great new friends, and that I declare Fuerzas Comando Competition 2009 closed. I hope the future will provide the chance for us to come together again," said Humberto.



*A member of Brazil's Special Operations Brigade holds up the championship trophy for Fuerzas Comando 2009 in Goiania, Brazil. Ecuador finished 2nd and Colombia placed 3rd.*



## Fuerzas Comando 2009



(1) A Brazilian Special Forces soldier, who is part of the planning team and cadre for exercise Fuerzas Comando 2009, explains the events scoring to the judges representing 21 different nations in the Western Hemisphere while in Goiania, Brazil. (2) The U.S. team, represented by Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), jump in the water while participating in the swimming event of the Fuerzas Comando. (3) Colombian Special Forces negotiate the rope tower at the obstacle course event.



(4) A member of Ecuador's Special Forces "GEO" (Grupo Especiales de Operaciones) lifts a 44-pound box during the stress test event at Fuerzas Comando 2009. (5) A competitor representing the elite Guatemalan Special Forces "Kaibil" engages targets during the stress test event. (6) A sniper from the Paraguayan Special Forces notes the distance of a target during the range estimation event. The sniper teams judge the distances both with the naked eye and the aid of optical devices.





## **SOF AROUND THE WORLD - BRAZIL**

### **SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – SOUTH**

# **American Soldier graduates Brazilian jungle school**

*Story and photo by Special Operations Command-South  
Public Affairs*

In the jungles of Panama, a Brazilian major named Jorge Teixeira De Oliveira attended the U.S. Army's Jungle Operations Training Center. The experience encouraged him to develop a similar school in his country. The result is what is now known as the Brazilian Jungle Warfare Instruction Center (Centro de Instrucao de Guerra na Selva).

Located in Manaus, the school was established June 2, 1964, and is regarded as one of the toughest courses of its kind in the world. Brazilian Army jungle experts have provided training to thousands of military personnel from Brazil and other nations.

Now, 40 years later, the partnership between the United States and Brazil has come full circle as U.S. Special Operations Forces are attending and graduating from the world-class jungle warfare training the Brazilian military has created.

Warrant Officer Javier Alejandro, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C., recently attended and completed the tough eight-week course. He was the first American to graduate from this demanding course in the last seven years.

Alejandro was selected after returning from an extended deployment to attend the course due to his fluency in Portuguese.

Alejandro, a Green Beret, said he gladly accepted, knowing it was a rare opportunity and a great privilege.

"Once in Brazil, I learned the majority of the officers attending trained for well over six months in order to be ready for the course," recalled Alejandro. "(The course) is very physically demanding and not being used to the weather (average temperature 90 degrees and 80 percent humidity)



***Warrant Officer Javier Alejandro stands with a Brazilian comrade after graduating from the Jungle Warfare Instruction Center (Centro de Instrucao de Guerra na Selva) in Manaus, Brazil.***

could determine whether you made it through the first week of training."

The course is set up in four phases. The first phase is "Life in the Jungle." Students are taught survival techniques, plant and animal identification, water procurement, and other skills necessary for jungle survival. The second phase focuses on patrolling and navigation through the jungle terrain. The third phase teaches students operational planning, and the final phase brings all of the skills together during a culminating exercise.

Though an already highly trained and experienced Special Forces warrant officer, Alejandro said he was very pleased with the experience and believes the skills learned and the opportunity to work with the Brazilian military will be priceless during the rest of his career. This opportunity to train side by side with the Brazilians has expanded an important relationship between the Brazilian Armed Forces and the U.S. military.

Alejandro recommended the course as a good opportunity, particularly for Soldiers who have a good knowledge of the Portuguese language. Now that the door has been opened by Alejandro, the partnership and training opportunity offered by the Brazilians will continue for as long as there are Soldiers who are open to attend.

Since Alejandro's graduation, Staff Sgt. Matthew Nelson, another Green Beret from 7th SFG (A), graduated from the course Aug. 21.



# SWCC trains in Dominican Republic

*By Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger  
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs*

U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from a Special Boat Team conducted a Joint Combined Exchange Training with members of the Dominican Republic Navy June 18 through Aug 7.

The purpose of this JCET was to strengthen the partnership between the United States and the Dominican Republic Navy. This training exercise is held annually at the invitation of the Dominican Republic and focuses on supporting its counter-drug mission.

“All of the Special Operations Command – South international JCET partners in the Caribbean area of operations are seeking to develop their maritime mobility capability in the coastal and/or brown water environment through the training, support, and exchange, which the Special Boat Teams and the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School have to offer,” said Cmdr. Bill Irwin, commander of Naval Special Warfare Task Unit-Caribbean, who also helped arrange for NAVSCIATTS to give basic level maritime training to this and other units in the Dominican Republic. “The special skill sets which the Special Boat Teams and NAVSCIATTS have to offer through these training events enhance our partner nations’ capability and capacity to conduct counter-drug operations, while developing the skills of our Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen and building a strong theater security cooperation alliance. This alliance helps keep America safe.”

The course covers basic seamanship skills, including everything from towing the boats on trailers to inserting and extracting forces on the ground. Previous U.S. engagement with the Dominicans has included Enduring Friendship, a USSOUTHCOM-spearheaded multi-year program that aims to lay the groundwork for a regional security network of maritime patrollers by providing seven nations’ improved communications systems and high-speed interceptor boats. These four craft, delivered in 2007 as part of the Enduring Friendship initiative, have been augmented by two more boarding craft this year to vastly enhance the Dominicans’ capability to patrol their waters.

Although this detachment has done a previous JCET in

this region, each is unique.

“They are very eager to learn. We teach them the basics of everything, including weapon handling, medical and navigation—everything that builds the foundations of a Special Operations warrior,” said a SWCC petty officer second class. “At the same time, I’m getting a chance to practice my language skills and operate a different boat. I think we’re really learning a lot from each other.”

These skill sets are in demand by the Dominicans.

“Right now, we’re learning navigation. The officers, we already know how to do it, but we are learning new things that will help us,” said Dominican Republic Navy Ensign Amavle Arias. “Most importantly, we are learning basic combat medicine. This is important because we will use it in training while operating and in regular life.”

Arias is the commander of one of the vessels and says he will pass this training on.

“Our main mission is to stop drug trafficking. We learn here how to do fast maneuvers and how to stop them,” he said. “We have also learned that every mission has to follow a procedure to keep us safe.”



*Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen teach Dominican Republic Navy personnel maritime navigation techniques during a Joint Combined Exchange Training. This annual training is being conducted by request of the Dominican Republic to strengthen partnerships and increase their ability to counter drug trafficking, terrorism and to improve their overall ability to defend their borders. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Gary Johnson III.*



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

# Injured Special Operations Soldiers summit Mount Rainier

*Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Kosterman  
1st Special Forces Group (A) Public Affairs*

A little more than a year ago, the vehicle Sgt. 1st Class Mario Barragan was riding in was struck by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan's Helmand province. The blast killed one Soldier and severely wounded Barragan and a fellow Soldier.

The moment the bomb detonated during the Battle of Kajaki Sofla July 13, 2008, set into motion a series of events that changed Barragan's life.

Barragan, a Green Beret with 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., suffered blunt trauma to his face and shrapnel in his right leg. The El Paso native lost more than 75 percent of his lower right jaw and chin, and he has undergone eight facial reconstruction surgeries. Additionally, Barragan has had three surgeries on his leg and is scheduled to have more surgery on his face.

Despite these setbacks, Barragan accomplished a feat many do not dare: summit Mount Rainier.

"I never thought I would do this," said Barragan after summiting the 14,410-foot volcano. "I was bedridden for a couple of months (after the IED). I thought I was never gonna be able to walk again."

I took (this climb) as a challenge to help me with physical therapy. I was in a wheelchair for three months, a cane for four months after that, so I never thought I would do this," added Barragan.

Barragan, along with two other Soldiers injured overseas or in training, attempted the climb. Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Yandell, of 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and Capt. Reinaldo Gonzalez attempted the climb.

Gonzalez, who was paralyzed from the neck down after falling from an obstacle during the U.S. Army's Ranger School, did not summit because he was concerned for the safety of others on the descent from the summit.

Yandell was injured when he was hit by small-arms fire and a rocket-propelled grenade while serving in Afghanistan. After evacuation and close examination by doctors, shrapnel was discovered throughout Yandell's upper chest, including the



**Sgt. 1st Class Mario Barragan makes his way to the summit of Mount Rainier on the Emmons Glacier July 9, 2009. Barragan is recovering from severe physical injuries to his face and leg received from a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.**

area close to his heart. In order to remain in the Army, Yandell opted for exploratory surgery to remove the shrapnel near his heart. The successful surgery removed a 2.7 millimeter piece of shrapnel from the sensitive area.

The Army Ranger from Leesberg, Fla., said he "was kinda worried" about the climb before the start because he didn't know what level of cardiovascular abilities he had.

"My surgery was four months to the day (of the summit climb)," said Yandell. "There was some doubt just because you don't know about the unknown."

According to Yandell, he made the climb successfully because his confidence grew each day as he learned from his guides.

Camp Patriot, a nonprofit organization founded in Montana in 2006, made the trip possible for the three active duty Soldiers. The mission of the organization is to help disabled veterans enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing and shooting.

Among the volunteers to assist in the climb were country singer and former Ranger Keni Thomas and a handful of Soldiers from 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). The Soldiers volunteered and assisted in providing logistical support.



# Multinational sniper course teaches more than just cover, concealment

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

An out-of-place rock ... an olive drab rucksack not covered ... the subdued black muzzle of a Win Mag 300.

Just a few things that could get a Special Operations Soldier killed.

"Is there a blade of grass out of place, not enough grass or too many sticks? You start to go a little bit crazy here and get paranoid. You start to question your position and wonder whether or not you are actually hidden," said an Army Special Forces sergeant.

Concealed deep in the woods of the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, the SF sergeant and his partner, a German Special Forces sergeant, lay in the prone, target in sight and ready to fire one extremely accurate, discriminatory round. They've been in the same position for more than six hours through the night after stalking four kilometers to a hide-site where they could observe the target.

"We are used to training a certain way and techniques get ingrained into you," the American Special Forces sergeant said.

Over the course of five weeks, the two Special Operations Forces soldiers fired approximately 900 rounds, "which in any other course may not sound like a lot, but we try to make every bullet count here," the American sergeant said.

The course, the International Special Training Centre Sniper Course, teaches NATO partner SOF the fundamentals and proper techniques of sniping.

"This is a great opportunity," the American sergeant said, "because a lot of time in Special Operations, as well as in the conventional Army, the first time you meet soldiers from another country is downrange in combat.

"Having the opportunity to train with these individuals beforehand really improves the quality of the fighting force as a whole," the combat veteran said.

ISTC Sniper Course instructor, Sgt. 1st Class Chris Rightmyer agreed.

"The multinational environment, working with JMTC and

the NATO partners, allows us the opportunity to strengthen our relationships and build a rapport with other nations on the battlefield, which would be likely in the event of the soldiers randomly meeting during conflict," he said.

"These guys have a relationship that allows them to fight together and understand how to communicate effectively on the battlefield. They will have had the same training and worked together as a unified group," he said.

Rightmyer said the students learn the basic fundamentals of becoming a sniper: shooting, observation, judging distance and stalking.

The soldiers spend countless hours lying still and even more time processing math equations in their head to determine their distance between the hide point and the target. Using stalking exercises, memory and observation drills, Rightmyer and the other instructors teach the new snipers how to successfully eliminate targets without being detected.

"Not every Soldier can attend this school," the American Special Forces sergeant said, noting that his team is usually scattered throughout the world on missions or other training exercises.



**Army Master Sgt. Eric Ludan, an instructor for the International Special Training Centre's Sniper Course, provides feedback to two Special Forces Soldiers following a live-fire exercise July 24 at the Grafenwoehr Training Area. The Sniper Course is an intense five-week course that teaches NATO Special Operations Forces in basic sniper fundamentals.**



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

# Sentinels unveil new colors, welcome new commander

*Story and photo by Spc. Tony Hawkins  
USASOC Public Affairs*

The 528th Sustainment Brigade (Airborne) received new unit colors and a new commanding officer during an activation and change of command ceremony July 17 on Meadows Field at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Col. Lenny Kness received command of the newly activated unit from Col. Duane Gamble during the ceremony. Prior to the change of command, the new colors of the recently redesignated unit were unfurled by Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Tobin, brigade command sergeant major, and Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command. Mulholland also presided over the ceremony.

"I'm truly honored to be back at Fort Bragg joining the Sentinel team," Kness said. "Sentinels, I'm proud to be a part of your team. I'm excited to join you so we can continue to build, transform and shape the brigade in order to provide the best support to Special Operations Forces worldwide."

Formerly the Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne), the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Airborne) was officially activated during the ceremony. Although the name and insignia changed, the brigade's mission remains the same: providing dedicated service and support to Army Special Operations across the world.

"There's a saying that amateurs talk about strategy, while professionals speak about logistics," Mulholland said. "No matter how tough of a burly Ranger or Green Beret you may be, without the ammunition, the food, the clothing and equipment you need every day... well, let's just say you can only do so much with rocks. It is the logisticians behind the scenes, the communicators and Special Operations medical specialists bringing their magic to the battlefield, who allow the warfighting piece of this command to do what they do."

Mulholland applauded Gamble's accomplishments during his command, as well as the Soldiers of the brigade he is passing on to Kness.

"It has never been done better than it has under Duane's

command," he said. "All of these pieces do incredible work at making the fight happen, but you don't put the enabling piece under that. This is the formation that does that. That doesn't happen by accident; it happens because of leadership. Duane, I thank you for what you have done here by building on the great accomplishments of your predecessors. That is what every commander's job is, to take what is great and make it better."

It was a bittersweet moment for Gamble, who also spoke highly of the Soldiers he had under his command.

"When I stood here two years ago, I told you how proud, privileged and humbled I was to have the opportunity to serve as commander of this fine brigade and to support our Army's finest warriors," he said. "Today, I'll tell you that my service here as the commander of this team has been the highlight of my twenty-four year career."

Now, as Mulholland said, Kness has the responsibility to continue building on the successes of his predecessor.

"Lenny, we welcome you into command," he said. "He's no stranger to Army Special Operations and is a proven practitioner at every level of command. There could be no better guy to step in and take up the mantle of these new, beautiful colors, taking them to the next level. That's his job."



**Col. Lenny Kness (left), incoming commander of the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Airborne), receives the colors from Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, USASOC commanding general, during an activation and change of command ceremony on Meadows Field, Fort Bragg, N.C.**



# 3rd SFG (A) activates new Special Forces battalion at Fort Bragg

*By USASOC Public Affairs*

The 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) turned a page in its history by activating the newly established 4th Battalion Aug. 18 at Fort Bragg, N.C. The activation continues the expansion that includes one new battalion for each of the five active duty groups.

The activation of 4th Battalion satisfies the current global need for Special Forces by providing more Soldiers to support ongoing missions around the world. Not only will these additional Soldiers allow for more forces on the ground, but they will also provide needed relief for forces who have been continuously deployed since 9/11.

“The unfurling of the 4th Battalion colors marks an exciting new beginning full of opportunities and possibilities for even greater 3rd SFG (A) success in the future,” said Col. Gus Benton II, the Group commander.

In the months ahead, 4th Battalion will begin to share in the responsibilities to support operations as well as eventually deploying as a fully capable Special Operations Task Force to the Afghan theater in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The activation is a significant moment for not only the Group but also for those who have worked tirelessly for over three years to man, fund, equip, train and house battalion personnel.

“It marks several years of steadfast focus and effort by so many within the regiment and Special Operations Forces community, and I leave it to you to imagine the degree of challenges endured in standing-up a modern-day Special Forces battalion,” said Benton.

The new battalion consists of “a perfect blend of experienced officers and noncommissioned officers, along with those fresh out of the Special Forces qualification course and other operations support personnel whose first tour in Special Operations will be in this battalion,” said Lt. Col. Flemming Sullivan, the battalion commander. “Many came as volunteers, much

like their predecessors in the first special service force, to be part of something new; a unit that will build upon a legacy of tough men, innovators and winners.”

The next Group to activate a 4th battalion will be 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, Colo.



*During the activation ceremony for 4th Battalion, 3rd SFG (A) at Fort Bragg, N.C., Aug. 18, 2009, the Group commander Col. Guss Benton II and the now 4th Battalion commander Lt. Col. Flemming Sullivan unfurl the colors for the first time, signifying the activation of the Battalion. Photo by Spc. Michael Creech.*



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

*Members of a West Coast-based Navy SEAL team participate in infiltration and exfiltration training during a Northern Edge 2009 training exercise. An Army aviation unit transported the SEALs in CH-47D Chinook helicopters, performing two-wheel landings atop mountainous terrain in the Joint Pacific Alaska Range. Photo by Lance Cpl. Ryan Rholes.*







# Navy SEALS, Task Force-49 pilots conduct joint training during Northern Edge 2009

*By Lance Cpl. Ryan Rholes  
Northern Edge Joint Information Bureau  
Public Affairs*

Thirteen Operators from a West Coast-based SEAL team recently worked hand in hand with Army pilots from Task Force - 49, 1-52 Aviation Battalion, Bravo Company, to perform final checks on equipment during a training evolution designed to promote and develop interoperability.

The exercise was part of Exercise Northern Edge 2009, which is one of a series of U.S. Pacific Command exercises that prepare joint forces to respond to crises in the Asian Pacific region.

Pilots aboard the Chinook CH-47D used this evolution to practice troop transportation and dropping troops while using a two-wheel landing.

"Troop transportation is a large part of what we do, but it is something we have not been able to train for lately," said Capt. Thomas Pierce, a Chinook pilot.

"Having these guys in the back added

an element of realism unattainable with our ground units currently deployed."

Landing on two wheels allows pilots to drop troops in confined spaces that do not allow for conventional landings, added Pierce.

Although the training evolution provided a good training opportunity for the Army pilots, they were not the only ones who gained from the experience.

"We rarely get the chance to work with the Chinooks, so this is a good chance to familiarize ourselves with the airframe and how to get on it and off it quickly," said Darrin, a SEAL whose rank and last name are withheld to protect his

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*"We rarely get the chance to work with the Chinooks, so this is a good chance to familiarize ourselves with the airframe, and how to get on it and off it quickly."*

*— A SEAL participating in the exercise*

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identity. "We use this airframe to get us to the fight and to get us out."

The pilots inserted the SEALs at three different locations. At each location, the SEAL team practiced exiting the aircraft quickly, establishing security and properly reboarding the aircraft while maintaining a security element. This evolution is one of several the SEAL team participated in while attending Northern Edge 2009.



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

# Alaskan sun sets on Exercise Northern Edge 2009

*By Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller*  
*Northern Edge Public Affairs*

Exercise Northern Edge 2009, the largest biannual military training event in Alaska, came to a close June 26 after 11 successful days of joint interaction at numerous locations throughout the state.

This exercise, which involved almost 200 aircraft, provided nearly 9,000 servicemembers from all branches of the military the opportunity to train together on, above and afloat in Alaska's massive training areas. In addition to the permanent personnel already here, almost 2,000 personnel deployed to Alaska from the United States, Japan and South Korea while another 5,000 were stationed aboard the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) operating in the Gulf of Alaska.

"This exercise was designed to train participants in a

joint environment, which is an essential element of preparation for combat," said Air Force Brig. Gen. Mark Graper, 354th Fighter Wing commander. "It allows the servicemembers to practice tactics, techniques and procedures which need to be synchronized between the different branches of the military."

Across the board, better command, control, communication and understanding between each service were some of the most important practices sharpened during the event in order to develop better interoperable plans for the future.

According to Air Force Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, commanding general of Alaskan Command and 11th Air Force, being able to train in Alaska each year is valuable because it has more than 65,000 square miles of available training space over land, and 120,000 when including the Gulf of Alaska. This space includes Alaska's Joint Pacific



Alaska Range Complex, Gulf of Alaska restricted air space, and an in-transit corridor connecting military training air space and live-fire training ranges.

“Northern Edge is the premier exercise conducted within the Pacific Command’s area of responsibility,” said Atkins. “It lets our joint warfighters learn about each other.”

Learning about each other and the way the varying services operate is very important, according to Air Force Maj. Lyle Dawley, Northern Edge exercise control team chief.

“Communication can be a big challenge,” he said. “We don’t always speak the same language whether we are on the ground or in the air.”

Realistic scenarios were employed during the exercise so each unit could gain the most from the training, particularly in the areas of defensive counter-air, close-air support, air interdiction of marine targets and personnel recovery missions.

Many of the airborne scenarios required pilots to stay in the air for long periods of time, and the Alaska National Guard’s 168th Air Refueling Squadron enabled that to happen. The Squadron, based at Eielson Air Force Base, flies KC-135 refuelers.

“It’s like these guys are pulling into a full-service flying gas station,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Tim Trefts, the squadron’s wing plans officer. “This gets our fighter pilots deeper into enemy lines and cuts down on the time it takes to get air support to guys on the ground.”

In another exercise scenario, members of a West Coast-based Navy SEAL team trained with Fort Wainwright’s Army Task Force 49, conducting security missions and insertions from CH-47D Chinooks in the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex. They also practiced river crossing techniques in Phelan Creek with instructors from the Northern Warfare Training Center.

“The water was pretty cold and the current was fast, but our guys weren’t afraid to get in there and go to work,” said one senior SEAL team member. “The training that we are learning here is invaluable. We are always looking for ways to improve skills; Northern Edge 09 gives us an opportunity to do that.”

The John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group, which consists of the USS John C. Stennis, Carrier Air Wing 9 and USS Antietam, was stationed in the Gulf of Alaska for its portion of the exercise. The carrier was the chief asset of the

naval component commander in the exercise scenario, as well as providing airpower when necessary, according to a pre-exercise statement made by Navy Capt. Joseph Kuzmick, Stennis commanding officer.

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni supported the exercise at Eielson Air Force Base with various components of personnel including Marines and Sailors with Marine Aircraft Group 12 headquarters, Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224, Marine Wing Support Squadron 171, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12, and augments from Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron such as the Provost Marshal’s Office and Public Affairs. Additional Marines also supported from Marine Air Control Squadron 4 out of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa, Japan. Also from Futenma, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 operated at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. In all, approximately 290 Marines and Sailors from III Marine Expeditionary Force participated.

“Northern Edge is MAG-12’s best opportunity to get together with the Navy and Air Force to practice advanced tactics in missions that are similar to what we would have to do here in the Pacific area of operations,” said Lt. Col. James Walker, MAG-12 operations officer. “We work with large forces here, 50 to 60 aircraft at a time, and that’s not something we get to do on a daily basis. So, this is a good opportunity for MAG-12 to train in a tactical environment.”

Exercise Northern Edge is just one in a series of Pacific Command sponsored exercises that helps forces prepare to respond to potential future crises in the Asia Pacific region.



**Steven Decker briefs a group of Navy SEALs on river crossing and rope techniques during a Northern Edge 2009 training exercise at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Courtesy photo**



## NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

# Romanian chief of staff visits Naval Special Warfare Units



**Romanian Navy chief of staff Adm. Gheorge Marin fires an M-240B machine gun during a visit to the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, John C. Stennis Space Center, Miss. Marin is the Romanian military equivalent to the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.**

**Story and photo by  
Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger  
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs**

Naval Special Warfare Command recently hosted a visit by Romanian Navy chief of staff Adm. Gheorge Marin to Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School and Special Boat Team 22.

During the visit, Rear Adm. Garry Bonelli, the deputy commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, showed Marin key aspects of training and partnership building efforts taking place in these facilities.

“Creating and sustaining relationships is a vital part of our mission,” said Bonelli. “Reaching out to other navies and sharing visions for the future, and how to get there, is a

fundamental way to strengthen those bonds.”

The mission of NAVSCIATTS is to provide partner nation security forces with the highest level of riverine and littoral craft operations and maintenance technical training. The school, which usually runs 10 courses simultaneously for members of up to 20 countries, is adjacent to SBT-22, U.S. Special Operations Command premiere riverine command. Both are operated predominantly by Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, SOCOMs maritime mobility experts and some of the best mariners in the world.

“I was impressed with the facilities and the range of specialized training the curriculum covers,” said Marin. “It would be very interesting to continue training for our special units of the Romanian Navy at such a professional and highly qualified training command. This kind of partnership would be beneficial for the Romanian Navy in its endeavor to maintain security in the Black Sea region.”

NAVSCIATTS has been conducting security force assistance since 1963 to prepare partner nation forces to conduct small craft operations in riverine and littoral environments, as well as develop professional and personal relationships. The affiliation with Romania included eight students who attended in-resident courses from 2003-2005. Also in 2003, a mobile training team visited Romania to provide in depth follow-on training.

This mission is closely aligned with the Navy’s maritime strategy of increasing security and alliances in waterways across the globe. With this waterborne mission, it is natural for NAVSCIATTS to fall under NSWG-4, U.S. Special Operations Command’s maritime mobility component.

During the visit, Marin toured the schoolhouse and observed a variety of classes, received briefs on the functions of both units and participated in a capability demonstration of the Special Operations Craft-Riverine, operated by SBT-22.



# SEALS reach peak of Mount Kilimanjaro

*By Chief Petty Officer Stan Travioli*

As part of their individual culture of fitness and SEAL Ethos, nine U.S. Navy SEALs completed a successful eight-day climb up Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, July 26, which proved to be a very personal experience for one of the participants.

"There are plenty of people who do it (climb Kilimanjaro), said Lt. Cmdr. Chris Irwin, executive officer of Naval Special Warfare Unit 2, who led the expedition in memory of his father, Paul.

"It's not difficult like Everest, which is a technical climb. But it was harder than we thought. "I had altitude issues, and most of the guys had one issue or another," said Irwin.

Although SEALs are some of the fittest athletes in the world, many of the team members spent a few weeks hiking with heavy packs to prepare.

"The (climbing) company has porters to help you carry supplies and gear up. You normally only carry a small backpack with water and snacks in it," said Irwin.

To make it a bit more challenging, the SEALs carried a lot of their personal gear instead of using porters, something some climbers say only a few attempt.

The crew climbed a few thousand feet each day with overnight stays to acclimate and rest before the next day's push.

"It was gorgeous," said Irwin. "We went through five different climate zones: forests, desert, and then at the top, there are gigantic glaciers."

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*"We went through five different climate zones: forests, desert, and then at the top, there are gigantic glaciers."*

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*— Lt. Cmdr. Chris Irwin*

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For Irwin, this trip was important to him for a very personal reason. His father, Paul, attempted to climb the 19,331-foot summit, but a racing heart stopped him short of the peak. Two years later, while on a walking safari in Tanzania, Paul suffered a fatal heart attack.

Chris completed the dream of his father with support from fellow SEALs. The team used leave time to finish his father's mission.

"I wanted to take some of his ashes to the top and spread them," said Chris. "This whole thing became a personal thing. I wanted to do what my dad tried in 2005 and did not make it to the top."

Climbing the mountain costs several thousand dollars, money that most can't afford to spend. So Chris created the nonprofit group, the Paul Irwin Memorial Climb Fund, in his personal time to benefit the American Heart Association.

Through an online Web site and friends, the nine climbers raised more than \$15,000 to cover the cost of the climb and donated 75 percent of the proceeds to the Association, all during their non-

duty time.

"There are a lot of charities that give to the SEALs, but here is a chance for us as SEALs to give back," said Irwin.

Hundreds of people donated time and money to help Chris honor his father. At the summit, Chris spread some of his father's ashes.

"I knew it was going to be emotional, and it played out mostly like I imagined it would," said Irwin.



# Past, present Air Commandos unite for counterinsurgency fight

By 1st Lt. Lauren Johnson  
Provincial Reconstruction Team Paktya

The two Air Commandos last saw each other in 1999, when they served together in the 20th Special Operations Squadron as crewmembers on the MH-53 PAVE LOW out of Hurlburt Field, Fla.

So Lt. Col. Carlos Halcomb, a former MH-53 pilot, and Capt. Michael McCarter, previously a flight engineer, were surprised to run into each other in an Army dining facility in the Midwest 10 years later.

Over the past three months at Camp Atterbury, Ind., both officers have enjoyed reconnecting while preparing for a new kind of warfare-building infrastructure and governance capacity in rural Afghanistan as members of provincial reconstruction teams.

"I was always on the side where my job was to hurt the enemy," said McCarter, who commissioned as a physician's assistant and is now serving in that capacity on the PRT for Zabul province. "This is a totally different mindset."

PRTs have been an active component in the Afghanistan counterinsurgency campaign since 2002, aimed at developing infrastructure and strengthening governance in 26 provinces throughout the country.

Whereas Special Operations firepower is typically aimed at eliminating the opposition, "a counterinsurgency fight is about undermining the support base for the opposition," said Halcomb, the incoming commander for PRT Paktya.

As McCarter learned when he served on the Laghman PRT in 2006, this shift in focus requires a new set of tools.

"Traditionally in Special Operations we've done things like leaflet drops," he said. "But you can't do that in Afghanistan (where the population is largely illiterate)."

In Zabul province, literacy rates are estimated to be between one and 15 percent.

Instead, Captain McCarter "spent a lot of time with a hammer and a drill, doing construction work."

A key component of degrading local support of the enemy is to provide a better alternative than the insurgents offer, Halcomb said.

PRTs work with the provincial government, village elders and religious leaders and industry officials to help provide basic services and build development capacity among the Afghan people.

"We're in the business of putting Afghans in business," Halcomb said. "And the eventual result of that is it will put us out of business, and we will leave."

In Laghman, McCarter and his team worked directly with the local population in the public health arena, helping Afghans improve water purification procedures, provide veterinary care for livestock, and develop accessible

food sources for malnourished children.

Going from the tip of the kinetic spear to the heart of a non-kinetic battle can be difficult, the former Air Commandos said, but it's not an entirely new concept.

Halcomb followed up his 20th SOS tour with five years as a foreign aviation advisor in the 6th Special Operations Squadron.

"This deployment has a lot of the same aspects that you develop in the 6th SOS, as far as mentoring and working across cultural boundaries," he said.

Maj. J.D. Loftis, who will be joining McCarter on the Zabul PRT, has been learning about Afghanistan's cultural boundaries for a long time as a regional affairs strategist and director of the South and Central Asia Orientation Course at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School.

Loftis studied Pashtu, one of Afghanistan's primary languages, at the Defense Language Institute, and he

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*"I was always on the side where my job was to hurt the enemy. This is a totally different mindset."*

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*— Capt. Michael McCarter*

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jumped at the chance to get involved in reconstruction work and put his language skills to use.

“To my knowledge, I’m the first U.S. military Pashtu speaker to be part of a PRT,” he said. “During training I’ve been the mission lead, representing the commander, and I’ve been able to speak directly to the villagers.”

Loftis is the PRT’s public information officer, where he is tasked with fighting the increasingly important winning hearts and minds; countering insurgent propaganda and encouraging public support for the Afghanistan government and coalition forces.

Loftis said that while his language skills make him an asset to his team, his counterinsurgency experience is also valuable.

“At USAF Special Operations School, we teach counterinsurgency principles, and now we’re living them,” he said. “I’ve applied a lot of the things I’ve taught there.”

Additionally, another Air Commando, Staff Sgt. Kristopher Thomas from the 1st Special Operations Logistic Readiness Squadron, is with the Zabul PRT.

Thomas is working as a master driver, but even driving Humvees, he said, requires a counterinsurgency mindset.

“You have to constantly be on the lookout, watch your speed and keep your distances,” he said, adding that one mistake behind the wheel could lead to civilian casualties or other consequences that undermine public support for the PRT.

In one training scenario, Thomas took control of the vehicle and called in rescue information over the radio when the truck commander was a simulated casualty.

“I didn’t think there would be as much to it,” Thomas said. “I’m dealing with stuff I’ve never been exposed to before.”



**Capt. Michael McCarter, physician's assistant for the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Zabul Province, Afghanistan, examines Staff Sgt. Paul Herrera July 16. Provincial Reconstruction Teams have been operating in Afghanistan since 2002 and work with provincial government and the local populace to improve security, development and governance. Photo by Maj. J.D. Loftis.**

Senior Airman Christina Bower, 1st Special Operations Medical Group, who is deployed as a combat medic for PRT Paktya, is also finding herself in an unfamiliar, but exciting environment.

“I’m going from a clinic setting to being in the field,” she said. “I’m excited to use skills that I’ve never been able to use. I’m nervous that something could happen, but I know that if it does, I’ll know what to do.”

Thomas said his time as an Air Commando helped prepare him for the job.

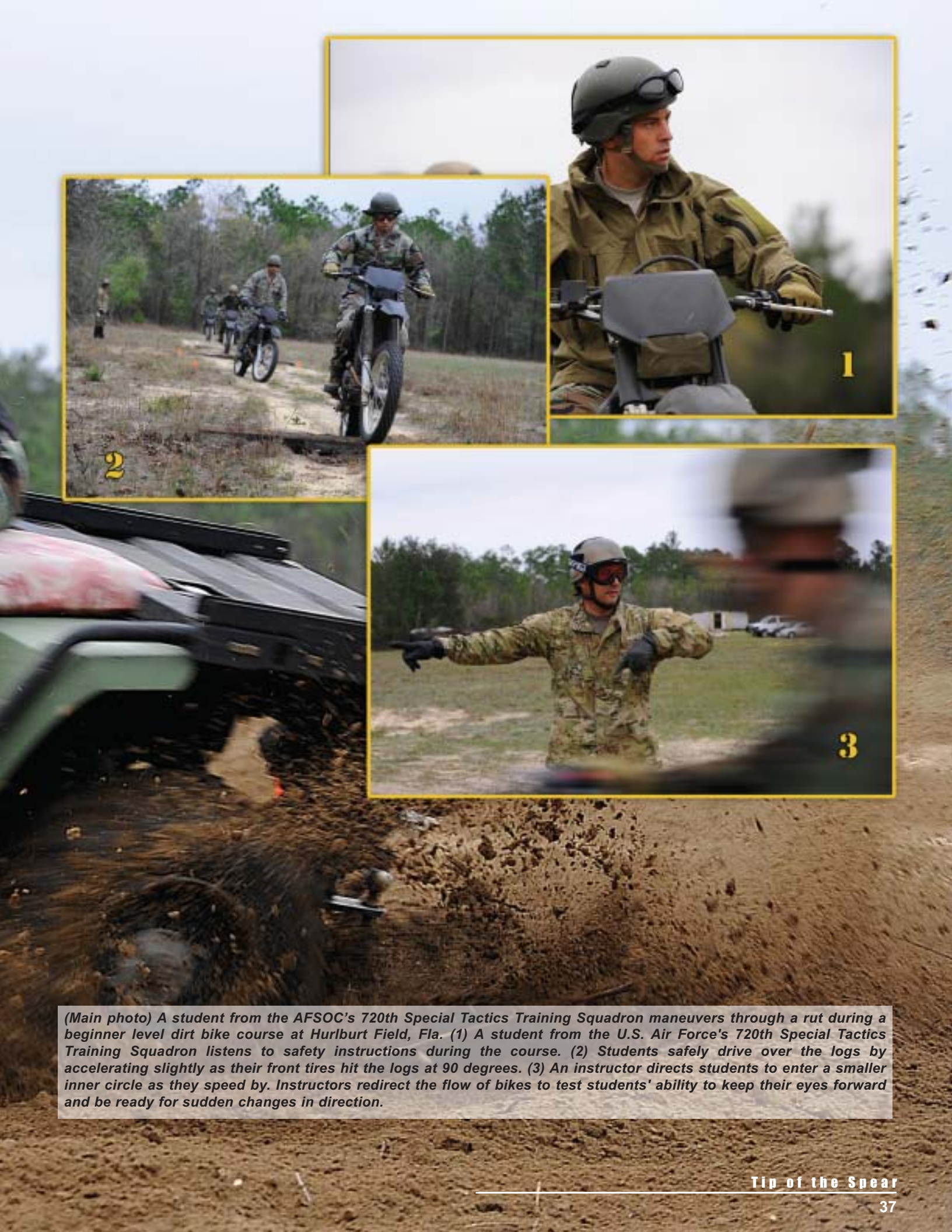
“AFSOC is different. We don’t have the normal mindset, we’re more gung-ho,” he said. “PRTs are part of changing history, and that’s what AFSOC is all about.”



# AFSOC DIRT BIKE TRAINING

Photos by Senior Airman Julianne Showalter





*(Main photo) A student from the AFSOC's 720th Special Tactics Training Squadron maneuvers through a rut during a beginner level dirt bike course at Hurlburt Field, Fla. (1) A student from the U.S. Air Force's 720th Special Tactics Training Squadron listens to safety instructions during the course. (2) Students safely drive over the logs by accelerating slightly as their front tires hit the logs at 90 degrees. (3) An instructor directs students to enter a smaller inner circle as they speed by. Instructors redirect the flow of bikes to test students' ability to keep their eyes forward and be ready for sudden changes in direction.*



*A Marine with a company from 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, leads his mule on a mountain trail. (Opposite page) A MARSOC Marine leads his mule across a creek during a mule and troop movement. Marines and Sailors went through mule packing classes at Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif. MARSOC courtesy photos.*

# MSOC improves land navigation, learns mule packing

By Lance Cpl. Stephen Benson  
MARSOC Public Affairs







Marines and Sailors with a company from 2d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, continued their Deployment for Training program by traveling to the Mountain Warfare Training Center at Bridgeport, Calif., to conduct mountain environment training, mountain patrolling, land navigation and mule packing.

The first days of training at the MWTC were devoted to classes. MWTC instructors taught the company important lessons vital to their success during not only the practical application exercises in the course, but also in their eventual combat deployment. Classes included mountain safety, health and weather awareness, as well as cold-weather patrolling, route planning, mountain casualty evacuation and bivouac routines. Designated personnel split off and received separate classes on mountain communications and operation of the small unit support vehicles.

After two days of classes and preparation, members of the company divided into groups, with personnel gathering in their Marine Special Operations Teams and the headquarters group forming their own team. Group leaders sat down with their maps and navigation tools and plotted routes they would take the following day. The routes were customized for each group based on the type of terrain and route length. The MSOTs plotted longer and more difficult routes because of their increased proficiency with land navigation.

Groups departed in the morning and moved into the surrounding mountainous terrain. During the route they received instruction on map-reading techniques and methods of finding their position using known points and landmarks. MSOTs took routes that led them higher than

10,000 feet above sea level.

The next day, Marines and Sailors participated in a mule packing class with the MWTC Pack Outfit. Students learned basic mule health and safety rules prior to cleaning and prepping the mules for packing classes.

“These mules are a lot healthier and generally larger than the mules they may find in Afghanistan,” said Sgt. Chad Giles, an instructor with the MWTC Pack Outfit. “The mules we use receive regular veterinary care and are ideal for traveling with heavy loads through rough terrain.”

Instructors set up different teaching stations and rotated the students between them. Box-hitching, barrel-hitching and various other packing techniques were taught at the stations. Each technique provided for the type of equipment being loaded and how it would sit securely and comfortably on the mule’s back.

“Mules can be stubborn and feisty animals,” said Giles. “But they can climb just about anywhere the Marines can, and they can do it carrying a lot more weight.”

Once the mules were packed up and the Marines and Sailors had received their preliminary classes, instructors took them for a hike. This gave students the chance to see how the mules moved with a combat load. Students also learned the challenges of taking care of them when bivouacking on long hikes. According to course instructors, mules require a certain amount of maintenance and care in order to work diligently for their Marine or Sailor.

After the courses and the hikes were over, the Marines and Sailors of the company had an improved understanding of how to tackle the high elevations and rough, cold terrain of the mountains. It will be a valuable skill to have should they deploy to the similarly difficult terrain in Afghanistan.



# MARSOC Marines take to the hills

*Story and photo by Sgt. Steven King  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

In 218 B.C., during the second Punic War between Rome and Carthage, the great Carthaginian, Gen. Hannibal, did what many Romans thought to be impossible – he invaded northern Italy by marching his army over the Pyrenees and the Alps mountain ranges. Not only did he have to fight his way through various tribes using clever mountain tactics, he also had to combat the harsh mountainous elements, the elevation, logistical problems, and the terrain. After engaging in three strenuous weeks of training at the Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., during exercise White Mountain, the Operators of 3d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, may have a new appreciation for the challenges that Hannibal faced in the mountains.

“One thing is for sure, it wasn’t a stroll through the park,” said Cpl. Victor Escobar, watch officer, about the mountainous terrain. “It took us a few days to completely get used to the thinner air. Sports athletes who train in high altitude environments don’t have to do so with thirty pounds of gear on, but combat athletes like us do.”

This training was part of a three-week exercise where the Operators sharpened their skills in an environment up to 7,500 feet above sea level. Shooting, river-crossing, convoy operations, reconnaissance, patrolling, direct-action hits and close quarters battle were all practiced on a terrain different from the flat, swampy woods many operators were accustomed to in North Carolina.

“Just being out here is training in and of itself,” said Escobar. “We don’t have mountains like this back home in which we can apply our skills resembling certain parts of Africa or Afghanistan.”

The Operators also had the opportunity to train with Marines from 3d Battalion 1st Marines and Navy SEALs. The three units worked together to create a training evolution, giving each participant a realistic feel for the interoperability of Special and conventional Forces.

“It was great working with three, one and the SEALs,” said Sgt. Hunter Lobertini, joint fires observer. “They got to



**Marines with 3d Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, conduct a direct action hit during training at the Mountain Warfare Training Center, in Bridgeport, Calif. The training was part of a three-week exercise where the Operators sharpened their skills in an environment up to 7,500 feet above sea level.**

see how we do business and vice versa. Even though we all have different ways of doing things, we’re all on the same side, fighting the same enemy and facing the same challenges.”

Though the Marines and Sailors of MARSOC didn’t have to fight native tribes and mountain rock, or feed elephants and horses the way Hannibal’s army did, their experience in the mountains of MWTC still held great value.

“All in all I feel we’ve learned a lot from this training evolution,” said Escobar. “The feedback and ideas that were compiled by the team members are sure to serve us well when the time comes for us to operate in an environment similar to this one.”

Though elephants have been replaced with motorized vehicles for mobility, and the bow and arrow has been replaced by the M4 Carbine assault rifle, the Marines and Sailors of 3d MSOB learned that the challenges of mountain warfare remain constant, despite the advances in technology.



# MARSOC Enablers shoot to skill

*Story and photo by Cpl. Richard Blumenstein  
MARSOC Public Affairs*

Enablers with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, put thousands of rounds down range to prepare for combat alongside Operators July 28 through 31 in Stone Bay's Dodge City, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Enablers are Marines in support billets within MARSOC who do not go through the MARSOC training pipeline as its Operators do. However, they do deploy with the Operators to support missions in combat.

"The four-day Enhanced Marksmanship Program was designed to help bring the combat proficiency of Enablers within MARSOC to a level more comparable with its Operators," said Capt. Michael Stevens, an officer with MARSOC, and the range safety officer during the EMP course.

"All of these guys here are getting ready to deploy sometime shortly, or in the future," Stevens said. "With this course they're more on par to where they need to be, so when they jump into a pre-deployment training cycle with a Marine Special Operations Company they're able to talk the lingo and perform at a higher standard."

Cpl. Daniel Sartain, a radio operator with MARSOC, has been slated to attach to an MSOC deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The Operators do this everyday; they practice way more than I have the ability to practice," Sartain said. "This course has not just greatly improved my skills, but it's given me more confidence that I won't slow the Operators down."

The course focused on improving the Marines' combat marksmanship in shooting an M-16A4 service rifle, M4 carbine assault rifle and M9 pistol, while carrying a full combat load.

The Marines fired thousands of rounds at targets while performing numerous drills meant to improve their ability to hit targets at various distances. The drills also focused on combat reloading and transitioning from a rifle to a pistol.

For many of the Marines, shooting on the run proved

to be one of the most difficult portions of the course. The Marines divided into groups of three and assaulted Dodge City.

"The main purpose is to get the Marines' hearts moving, give them a different challenge than what they are used to facing," Stevens said. "Now they have their heart pumping and their blood circulating creating an added degree of difficulty."

Each team ran through the training area gunning down steel targets representing enemy insurgents. The Marines used teamwork to conquer obstacles such as walls and chain link fences.

Instructors presented the teams with a 240-pound simulated casualty once they reached the end of the training area. They then had to run back to the start with the casualty where they received their finishing time.

"Confidence is everything, and I'm confident now," Sartain said. "I know how to do this and have the skills behind it. If I have to use it in battle I know what I'm doing."

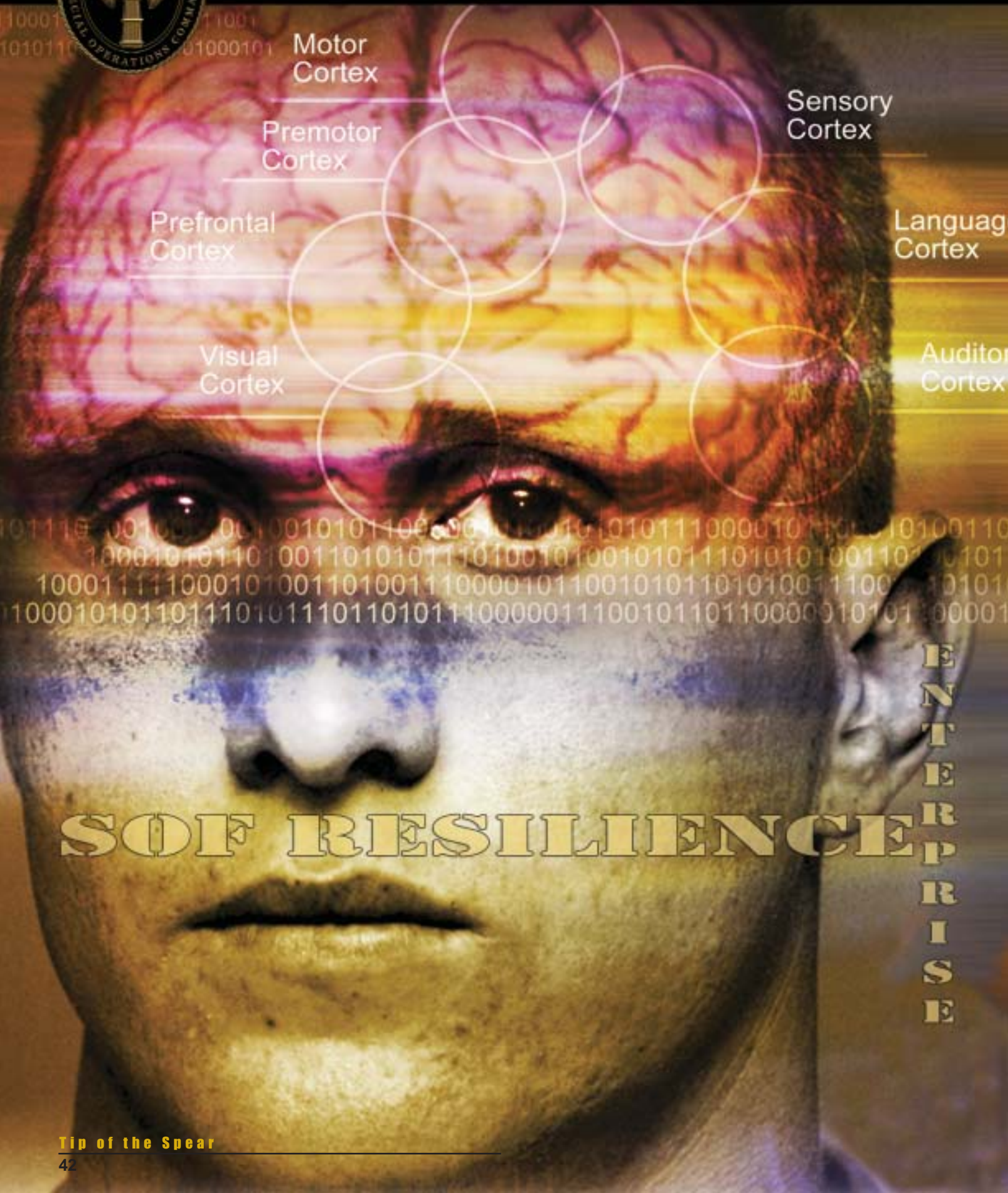


**Enablers with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, run with a 240 pound simulated casualty during an Enhanced Marksmanship Program course July 29 at Stone Bay's Dodge City, Camp Lejeune, N.C.**





## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS



# SOF RESILIENCE

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# SOF leadership in the face of stress

By Mike Bottoms

USSOCOM Public Affairs

Not all stress is bad. Stress balanced with good leadership and adequate situational awareness can build resilience. Resilience in psychology is the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and catastrophe.

About a year ago, in an effort to bolster resilience within the Special Operations Forces community, Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, charged the USSOCOM Command Surgeon with the responsibility of identifying the source of stressors leading to adverse behaviors in SOF and their families. The result was the formation of the USSOCOM Resilience Enterprise Working Group.

The Command Surgeon at that time, Col. Warner (Rocky) Farr, established a team of psychologists in the Command Surgeon's Office that would work to assess and mitigate adverse behavioral effects in SOF.

The team of two included an Army active component research psychologist, Lt. Col. Craig Myatt, and an Army Reserve component clinical psychologist, Maj. Paul Boccio.

Under Farr's direction, Myatt and Boccio reviewed data from several of the component command psychologists and psychiatrists and studied material furnished by the USSOCOM Lessons Learned staff. The data review involved a trend analysis of issues ranging from traumatic brain injury to marital discord. Among those issues, and others such as misconduct and suicide, SOF personnel showed a relatively lower frequency of adverse behaviors over a nine-year period of sustained operations than servicemembers outside of the SOF community.

The initial effort by Myatt and Boccio also defined a methodological approach for assessing the challenges faced by SOF personnel. That approach targeted a process for reviewing the long-term effects of contemporary operations and endorsed the formulation of existing and new partnerships inside and outside of USSOCOM in support of a proposed command sponsored program.

In February, Olson directed Myatt to develop a

program serving the needs of SOF personnel and families against the adverse effects of stress associated with current and projected operations. The first step toward program development involved charter approval for a working group consisting of members from the USSOCOM headquarters and each component. Brig. Gen. Steven Hummer, then chief of staff, approved the charter, March 13, for the USSOCOM Resilience Enterprise Working Group. The designated component command representatives in the working group are command psychologists and a command psychiatrist who function as behavioral health and psychology subject matter experts in their respective commands.

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*"The family is a system among systems that supports the SOF warrior, deployed or otherwise."*

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*— Lt. Col. Craig Myatt*

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The REWG met initially to review best practices in each of the components. That review led to approval of an Initial Capabilities Document sanctioning the REWG as a chartered body representing the command to improve psychological performance and to reduce the likelihood and severity of psychological injury in SOF and their

families. The REWG was established through an existing program in the Command Surgeon's Office known as the Warrior Rehabilitation Performance Centers Program.

The REWG met again in July to define SOF resilience and to refine the mission and goals of the REWG. The contributions of the component psychologists at that conference signified a measure of commitment and rapid action among all of the command psychologists in support of resilience education, leadership operational and strategic support, and families in transition to health. All USSOCOM components support resilience education, ongoing operational psychology in SOF units, and the use of Care Coalition Military Family Life consultants. Partnered internally with the USSOCOM headquarters directorates, the WRPC, the Care Coalition and the Command Chaplain, the panel of member psychologists in the REWG have asked the question, "Is there a problem with our SOF personnel?" The answer the REWG generated is, "no."

SOF often face seemingly unimaginable stress in combat yet are equipped to cope and become biologically and psychologically stronger. The survival and coping



## U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

mechanisms developed in SOF are both intuitive and learned. Individual survival and coping mechanisms, especially in small team elements, enhance operational success.

Current overseas contingency operations challenge first-line supervisors and commanders to expand their situational awareness not only on behalf of SOF and the support teams around them, but also to families. The family is an additional psychosocial support element for the SOF warrior that is being given increased attention because of its powerful influence on mission accomplishment. Leadership doctrine throughout the services is being rewritten to reflect the dynamic and diverse roles of family as well as the human dimension of the warrior ethos. In the SOF community, the family is increasingly being recognized as an operational support team on par with, if not even more important than, any other operational support team designated for mission support by unit commanders.

In generations past, the typical line NCO could utter unchallenged, "If Uncle Sam wanted you to have a family, then he would have issued you one." Not so in today's military. Single or married, U.S. servicemembers in the 21st century serve under leadership that acknowledges the value of family and strives to accommodate the human dimension of the warrior ethos. That stance is taken because military leadership now recognizes the ingenuity which won wars and conflicts for America in the past resides in the sanctity of self preservation, unit cohesion and healthy family relationships.

Leadership in the services over the past several years, but particularly in the SOF community, is expanding the role of behavioral health personnel. The USSOCOM headquarters and its components are using more psychologists in a consultative role working directly for commanders as special staff officers to help sustain combat power and the virtues of human dignity in the family. The cadre of component command psychologists serves each component commander and its subordinate units with psychological services for SOF warriors and their families. In the SOF community, the behavioral health support provided to SOF personnel and their families is formulated to surpass any stressor that tough training, intense

operations, irregular warfare or an astute adversary can bring upon our forces.

According to the REWG, there is no problem behaviorally with SOF personnel. Nor is there a problem with the families. However, the REWG members concede the pace of ongoing mission-focused demands require close scrutiny from a command, supervisory, operational and behavioral health standpoint on behalf of the SOF personnel and their families. That close scrutiny entails the identification of not only the adverse effects of stress, but also the positive benefits of stress in the SOF community.

As stated earlier, not all stress is bad. The enduring process SOF personnel go through for selection itself singles out SOF personnel as hardy and resilient. SOF personnel are tough, determined and committed. Can the same be expected of the SOF family members? "Yes, but in a different way," according to Myatt.

"As we develop a program that supports the five SOF Truths (1. Humans are more important than hardware. 2. SOF cannot be mass produced. 3. Quality is better than quantity. 4. Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies arise. 5. Most Special Operations require non-SOF support.) for SOF leaders and other personnel at the small unit level and institutionally, we can include the family in promoting education, communication and support as a means of sustaining combat power over time. Our operational concerns extend to the family. There is perhaps no other community in the military except SOF that can define the family as an operational support element that sustains combat power for commanders and first-line supervisors," Myatt said. "The family is a system among systems that supports the SOF warrior, deployed or otherwise."

A resilient person recovers quickly and adapts to illness, change or injury in a positive way. SOF personnel are already resilient because of their rigorous selection process. SOF families are more resilient than most. That does not, however, negate a leadership responsibility to ensure that SOF personnel and their families remain resilient in the face of stress.

"The developing goal of the SOF Resilience Enterprise Program is to sustain combat power by increasing resilience in SOF and SOF families to meet the challenges of a changing environment," Myatt said.

Each component has developed a separate program to

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*"Positively focused leaders help shape resilience."*

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*— Col. Carroll Greene III*

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address resilience and other aspects of operational psychology designed to its unique warrior culture. For example, Air Force Special Operations Command approaches its resiliency program with a “battle mind.”

“The battle mind is a warrior’s inner strength to face fear and adversity in combat,” said AFSOC’s command psychologist, Col. Carroll Greene III. “The battle mind merges powerful physical and mental survival response that helps to ensure survival.”

AFSOC holds pre-deployment and post-deployment seminars. Greene explains in the seminars that warriors drawn to SOF have similar attitudes and goals.

“The warriors want to confront personal fears and challenges, develop personal strength for success in life, are energetic, value adversity as a strength builder, and look for excitement to energize their life. They also want to be part of a close knit team, want to secure a future for themselves and their families, want to earn their peers’ respect and feel pride in their service to the nation,” Greene said. “These attitudes and goals produce strength and resilience.”

Greene also argues there are powerful positive effects to combat stress.

“Combat stress increases respect for other cultures and people, increases your appreciation for American values, strengthens commitment to loved ones, strengthens spiritual development, and affirms service at the ‘nation’s tip of the spear.’ Combat stress also strengthens part of your self image, strengthens you for future challenges and energizes your personal goals,” he said. “Positively focused leaders help shape resilience.”

In the AFSOC pre-deployment seminars, techniques are taught to manage adrenaline, how to transition from deployment to combat and how to deal with other adversities of deployment. In the post-deployment seminars, Airmen are trained in how to reduce their combat adrenaline and what to expect physically and emotionally in the first six weeks upon returning home. Assimilation back into family life is an integral part of the seminar and stress reduction services are offered.

Naval Special Warfare Command’s resiliency program falls under the Center for Military Relationships and Families. The center is chartered to prevent and treat combat stress. Group One builds resiliency through the NSW Resiliency Enterprise and FOCUS (Families Overcoming Under Stress) Project.

Group One’s efforts focuses on resiliency in seven ways; psychological, neuropsychological, physiological, psychosocial, lifestyle, financial and spiritual. The FOCUS Project provides resiliency services for children through workshops building their skills to cope with separating from a parent or parents due to a deployment.

Lt. Cmdr. Ray Nairn is the first psychologist at NSWG-2, and he reports receiving excellent command support for programs that he and the other NSW psychologists have proposed. He said he sees one of his most important unaccomplished missions as accurately identifying the needs of family members via a comprehensive needs-assessment survey.

“I would like to ensure that when NSW spends money to support the families, it is being spent on exactly what the families need versus an individual’s conjecture or a small sample size of opinions,” Nairn said. “I am optimistic the Resilience Enterprise Working Group will provide a forum to exchange the best practices from each of the services.”

“My commodore wants to support the families,” Nairn said. “He wants a committee of our family readiness coordinator, our chaplain and me to advise him.”

AFSOC’s and NSW’s resiliency programs are but two examples of USSOCOM’s commitment to the well being of SOF and their families. U.S. Army Special Operations and Marine Corps Forces Special Operation commands also have existing resiliency programs as well.

“Behavioral health readiness in theater and back in the United States is an operational force health protection issue,” Myatt said. “As we build stronger behavioral health readiness and resilience within the SOF community, we then improve overall operational readiness and performance in the teams and units.”





# JSOU course achieves objectives, builds partnerships

*By Charles Ricks and Christopher Jacobs  
Joint Special Operations University*

Twenty-two officers representing 18 countries from six continents completed the two-week Special Operations Combating Terrorism Course conducted by the Joint Special Operations University at Hurlburt Field, Fla., in May 2009. The course – one of the in-residence offerings of the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program – is based on a mix of traditional and emerging principles of Special Operations. Each lesson is crafted to accommodate a broad range of strategic learning objectives. As one recent South Asian student judged his SOCbT experience, “It was an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas on combating terrorism.”

Course objectives are designed to build individual, country, and regional capabilities and capacities for combating terrorism. To achieve that end, participants

are divided into four regional syndicate groups on the first day to encourage team building, to gain maximum benefit from the educational process, and to work as mini-coalitions confronting counterterrorism challenges.

The course director, Gordon Scott, highlighted a strategic benefit of his course. “Each group includes at least one U.S. officer normally from the Theater Special Operations Command or one of SOCOM’s component commands,” Scott said. “It is a tremendous way to build networks and relationships. In fact, I understand that some contacts initially made at the JSOU course have become the basis for other interaction in at least two theaters.”

To facilitate networking and interaction, the course includes several social events including faculty home-hosted dinners. These events are well-received by the international students and provide them with a better understanding of Americans and their culture. Other



*An officer from South America discusses terrorism challenges in his country during the Special Operations Combating Terrorism Course. JSOU courtesy photo.*



regular features are visits to local government and municipal emergency operations centers to gain perspective on law enforcement and civil government preparations for crisis management and disaster relief. “Both in class and after hours, our discussions provided a good base of knowledge for upgrading and improving our counterterrorism skills,” reported one officer.

Lectures and group discussions are focused on establishing common understandings of terrorism and terrorists, and on developing flexible strategic structures and plans for addressing specific threats. Each group is assigned a strategic planning requirement briefed and defended to a SOF Senior Mentor on the final day. After working with colleagues for 10 days on his group’s strategic plan, an officer remarked that, “The concept of the group project was very important ... it helped me develop skills that will be useful for me and my country.” Retired Brig. Gen. Joseph Stringham, serving as mentor for this iteration commented further, “I have participated in six of these courses and each one offers new insights. The quality of the presentations has improved dramatically. Most encouraging is the increased interaction among participants who often represent countries that do not regularly interact on a friendly or equal basis.”

JSOU presents the resident SOCbT Course three times annually. Due in large measure to the continued success of the course, JSOU co-hosted a regional version of SOCbT in the United Arab Emirates in April 2009. This marked the first time that JSOU provided its full two-week course overseas. This regional SOCbT course was sponsored jointly by JSOU, Special Operations Command-Central, the U.S. Liaison Office, the UAE Special Operations Command, and the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research. A total of 29 students from the UAE, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, and the United States participated in the course conducted at the UAE Armed Forces Officers Club. All



***Special Operations Combating Terrorism Course students prepare their group project for presentation. JSOU courtesy photo.***

course material was presented in both English and Arabic, and all lectures, questions and class discussions were similarly offered in both languages.

Most recently, spanning late August and early September 2009, another 22 officers from 19 countries participated in the summer offering of the SOCbT course.

This marked the eighth iteration. To date, 214 officers from 62 different nations have come together in an educational environment to strengthen their knowledge of combating terrorism. The officers acknowledge they learn from the diverse gathering of students as well as the first-class instructors and speakers who all come together for a common purpose. “Based on this experience,” said one officer from Africa, “I want to focus my career on combating terrorism in my country and region.”

The worldwide credibility of JSOU programs is reflected in the international participant evaluations. As one student commented, “The instructors and staff were high-quality people with lots of experience in combating terrorism ... I want to thank you a lot for the opportunity of being in this course.”



**U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS**

# **Rogers' Rangers: Special Operations Forces on the frontier**

*By Christian Fearer*  
*USSOCOM History Office*

The French and Indian War fought between 1754 and 1763 saw a clash of French forces and their Indian allies against the British army and its American allies for control of much of North America. Fighting in wilderness conditions against an enemy who did not tend to fight by European rules led the British and Americans to experiment with a different form of warfare.

Incidents such as Gen. Edward Braddock's defeat at the hands of a numerically inferior enemy along the banks of the Monongahela River near Fort Duquesne in 1755 indicated to British commanders that a traditional approach to European warfare in the backcountry would not guarantee success. Although the British could bring significant power to bear on the adversary, the Regular army generally lacked the ability to adaptively meet the enemy on its own terms.

By late summer 1757, the British command in North America was approaching an impasse. Although outnumbering their foe considerably, they had faced repeated defeats and setbacks. Now, following the fall of Fort William Henry in 1757 and the aborted campaign against Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, months of inactivity lay ahead for the weary, dispirited northern army.

It was becoming clear to the British command that the fluid nature of irregular warfare in the backcountry of America required the ability to maintain units of men with unique, unconventional capabilities that would allow them to respond in kind to their lethal, elusive enemy. In September 1757, John Campbell, Fourth Earl of Loudoun and Commander-in-Chief of Crown forces in North America, called on Robert Rogers, leader of irregular Ranger companies, to train volunteers from line regiments in unconventional tactics.



***Maj. Robert Rogers is in the Ranger Hall of Fame for outstanding service to Colonial America and the Colonial Army as a Ranger-type leader. Rogers commanded Rangers who served as part of the British army on the North American frontier during the French and Indian War. His great effectiveness prompted the British army to form light infantry regiments intended to operate like Rangers. Illustration courtesy of the Ranger Hall of Fame.***

Rangers, who were used most heavily in New York, provided a force capable of meeting the enemy on its own terms while extending the army's capabilities. For example, military campaigning was often seasonal; Regulars retired into winter quarters in the fall with operations suspended until spring. However, Rangers, using ice skates and snowshoes to navigate frozen rivers and deep snows, extended the campaigning season by conducting and countering raids and gathering



intelligence for senior leaders planning spring and summer offensives.

Rogers, with the encouragement of Loudoun and his immediate subordinates, established a 55-man company of volunteers drawn from the Regular ranks. "About this time," Rogers wrote in his journal, "Lord Loudoun sent the ...volunteers (from) the regular troops to be trained to the ranging, or wood-service, under my command and inspection; with particular orders to me to instruct them to the utmost of my power in the ranging-discipline, our methods for marching, retreating, ambushing, fighting, etc. that they might be the better qualified for any future service against the enemy we had to contend with."

The idea was to train these volunteers and equip them with the skills necessary to lead similar groups in actions against the French and Indians. It was, in many ways, a cadet school and commissioning program.

Rogers assembled his new volunteers into a training company and assumed immediate command. For their benefit and instruction, he reduced into writing "rules or plan of discipline" that he found "necessary and advantageous" on various occasions. The result was one of the first written manuals for irregular warfare in North America. Such rules included: "Whenever you are ordered out to the enemies' forts or frontier for discoveries, if your number be small, march in a single file, keeping at such a distance...as to prevent one shot from killing two men." "In general, when pushed upon by the enemy, reserve your fire till they approach very near, which will then put them into the greatest surprise and consternation, and give you an opportunity of rushing upon them with your hatchets and cutlasses to the better advantage."

Rogers' Rules, still used in an adapted form by Army Special Operations Forces today, was the core of this experimental program. If a trainee of Rogers' program wished to be commissioned in either the Rangers or the Regulars, he had to learn, apply, and demonstrate the fundamental rules, which, Rogers added, were to be flexible if "occurrences and circumstances" required.

Rogers tutored his volunteers on "the Great Island," home of the Rangers situated on the Hudson River immediately opposite Fort Edward, approximately 50 miles north of Albany. Unlike the Regulars, who crowded into canvas tents on the opposite shore and

within the outer redoubts of the fort, the Rangers and students were housed in huts, which were uniformly organized in a manner suggested by professional military strategists and tacticians.

Although some within the British high command viewed the Rangers as undisciplined rogues, the Rangers were mindful of their place within the traditional military organization, and their officers enforced strict discipline at the whipping post on the Rangers' parade ground, where initial training was likely conducted. The exact methods of instruction are, unfortunately, unknown; however, the volunteers were slowly integrated into Ranger units, where they learned firsthand the irregular tactics demonstrated by the veterans themselves.

Although Lord Loudoun recognized the Rangers' usefulness to the army and British operations (sometimes grudgingly), he was faced with real concerns of control and cost. As most Indians were unwilling to serve as scouts for the British, Loudoun was forced to use the Rangers. Regular army commanders were skeptical of the semi-autonomous Rangers and found it exceedingly difficult to exert control over what they believed to be undisciplined Americans. And then there was cost; nine Ranger companies were costing, on average, more than twice as much as a Regular regiment. It was Loudoun's hope to have the Rangers pass on their skills to Regular officers, who would later form Regular British ranging units; elements such as Rogers' Rangers would then be either disbanded or assimilated into the new system. As a result, the British military leadership would gain the control it sought while saving the Crown considerable expense. Such a transition, however, was never fully achieved.

Unfortunately for Loudoun, his hope of finding quick Regular replacements for American Rangers was not as easily accomplished as he had wished. This first attempt to integrate volunteers from line units with the Rangers was largely unsuccessful as the British army took up winter quarters in Albany, and the program was suspended almost seven weeks after inception. Of the original 55 trainees, 12 obtained commissions with Rogers' Rangers. By 1758, 23 others were given commissions in Regular regiments. Rogers' Rangers served for the remainder of the war.



# USSOCOM says farewell to commanders' secretary



**Loretta Keeton**

*By Master Sgt. Laura LeBeau*  
*USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Loretta Keeton, the only secretary to each of the eight commanders at U.S. Special Operations Command, retired July 1 in a ceremony at the officer's club at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., culminating a long and distinguished career of 43 years in Federal Civil Service.

Keeton began her 21-year career at USSOCOM as secretary to Gen. James Lindsay, the first commander of USSOCOM, and she ends her career as executive assistant to the commander. She has held the position of executive assistant to the commander since August 2006, the new title reflecting the increased duties and responsibilities her position entailed.

Speaking before a standing-room only audience, which included three former USSOCOM commanders, Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Gen. Charles Holland and Gen. Doug Brown, Keeton recalled the time in 1987 when she was interviewed and selected to serve as Lindsay's secretary.

"I was an outsider working at CENTCOM, and I considered my chances slim. But I made the cut. General Lindsay interviewed me, and, much to my surprise, offered me the job, and the rest is history."

In that history are seven subsequent SOCOM commanders Keeton served: Gen. Carl Stiner, Gen. Wayne Downing, Gen. Henry Shelton, Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Gen. Charles Holland, Gen. Doug Brown, and the current commander, Adm. Eric T. Olson.

"Loretta was the continuity and steadiness of the front office in a system that normally changes out the commander every three years and most of the military staff every year or two. The ability to transcend commanders so effortlessly is probably an under-rated quality, and Loretta has done this seven times," said Olson, who presided over the ceremony. Olson added, "Her legacy at United States Special Operations Command will be a powerful one. We'll miss her warmth and her positive spirit that she has contributed to our collective workplace."



*(Left) Loretta Keeton stands with six former commanders of U.S. Special Operations Command at SOF Mess Night 2007. From left to right are Retired Generals Charles Holland, Carl Stiner, Doug Brown, James Lindsay, the late Wayne Downing and Peter Schoomaker. (Right) Adm. Eric T. Olson, commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, officiated Keeton's retirement at the MacDill Air Force Base Officer's Club, July 1. Photos by Mike Bottoms.*



**SPECIAL OPERATORS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES  
SERVING IN AND PREPARING FOR  
OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM  
AND OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS  
WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN**



Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Bradley Bohle  
7th SFG (A)



Army Staff Sgt.  
Jason Dahlke  
75th Ranger Regiment



Army CWO 4  
Terrance Geer  
160th SOAR (A)



Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Alejandro Granado  
20th SFG (A)



Army Pfc.  
Eric William Hario  
75th Ranger Regiment



Army Staff Sgt.  
Paul Jackson  
160th SOAR (A)



Army CWO 4  
Robert Johnson  
160th SOAR (A)



Army Cpl.  
Benjamin Stephen Kopp  
75th Ranger Regiment



Army Staff Sgt.  
Andrew Lobosco  
7th SFG (A)



Army Capt.  
Ronald Luce  
20th SFG (A)



Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Shawn McCloskey  
7th SFG (A)



Army Staff Sgt.  
Joshua Mills  
7th SFG (A)



Marine Corps Capt.  
Joshua Meadows  
1st MSOB



Army Cpl.  
Nicholas Roush  
4th POG (A)



Marine Corps Sgt.  
Michael Roy  
3d MSOB



Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Severin Summers  
20th SFG (A)



Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Duane Thornsbury  
10th SFG (A)



Army Capt.  
John Tinsley  
7th SFG (A)



Army Staff Sgt.  
Chad Tucker  
160th SOAR (A)



Army CWO 2  
Douglas Vose  
10th SFG (A)

**Editor's note: Honored are SOF who lost their lives since July's Tip of the Spear.**



**Rangers from the 75th Ranger Regiment parachute from an MC-130 Combat Talon II over Fort Benning, Ga., Aug. 3, during Ranger Rendezvous 2009. More than 1,000 Rangers assigned to four Ranger battalions from across the country participated in the mass tactical jump. The aircraft is from the 15th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla.**  
*Photo by Senior Airman Jason Epley.*